570-214-1030-A

RADIO AND TELEVISION INTERVIEWING

TEC Lesson 570-214-1030-A

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PREPARED BY
OFFICE OF THE CHIEF OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS
DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
WASHINGTON, D C 20310

STUDENT/SUPERVISOR INSTRUCTIONS, PRETEST/POSTTEST, AND ANSWER KEY ARE CONTAINED IN THIS BOOK

REVISED MARCH 1985

D 101.6/7:

READEX FICHE best copy available

READ THE STUDENT/SUPERVISOR INSTRUCTIONS CAREFULLY. BE SURE YOU UNDERSTAND THEM COMPLETELY BEFORE BEGINNING THE LESSON. PLEASE DO NOT WRITE IN THIS BOOK.

The words "he," "his" and "men," when used in this publication, represent both the masculine and feminine genders, unless otherwise specifically stated.

STUDENT/SUPERVISOR INSTRUCTIONS

TYPE OF LESSON

- Broadcast Journalism

AUDIENCE

- Broadcast Journalists
- Skill Levels 1-4

TRAINING OBJECTIVES

Soldiers completing the lesson will be able to:

- Distinguish the different types of interviews and the methods of conducting them.
- Prepare for an interview.
- Conduct an interview and identify post-production considerations.

MATERIAL/EQUIPMENT REQUIRED

- Scratch paper
- Pencil

TIME REQUIRED

- Individual: 1 hour
- Group: 1 hour

REFERENCES

- DINFOS Radio and Television Handbook

STUDENT/SUPERVISOR INSTRUCTIONS

STUDENT INSTRUCTIONS

- Take the Pre-test/Post-test. If you pass, you do not have to take the lesson.
- Make sure you have the material, equipment and personnel required to complete the lesson.
- Take the lesson. Use a separate sheet of paper for the exercises. Do not write in this book.
- When you complete the lesson, take the Pre-test/Post-test. If you do not pass, take the lesson again.

SUPERVISOR INSTRUCTIONS

- Administer the Pre-test/Post-test to determine the need for the lesson. Responses to test questions must be made on a separate sheet of paper, not in the lesson book.
- Make sure the students have the material, equipment, and personnel required to complete the lesson.
- Administer the lesson to students who do not pass the Pre-test/Post-test. Remind them to write their responses to the exercises on a separate sheet of paper and not in the lesson book.
- Administer the Pre-test/Post-test to students who complete the lesson. Students who do not pass must take the lesson again.

TEC LESSON 570-214-1030A

Radio and Television Interviewing

This test consists of 13 questions that cover every training objective of the lesson. These questions have a total value of 13 points. When you have completed the test, check your answers against the Pre-test/Post-test Key on page 31. If you do not score at least 10 points, you must take the lesson, or take it again if you have already taken it. Write your responses on a separate sheet of paper. Do not write in this book.

1. What are the three types of interviews?
   a. opinion, information, ad-lib
   b. opinion, information, press conference
   c. opinion, information, personality
   d. information, personality, scripted
2. What are the three methods of conducting interviews?
   a. press conference, ad-lib, opinion
   b. scripted, semiscripted, informal
   c. informational, ad-lib, opinion
   d. ad-lib, semiscripted, scripted
3. What is the best method for conducting an interview?
   a. opinion
   b. informal
   c. ad-lib
   d. semiscripted
4. As the interviewer, whom do you represent?
   a. the public affairs office
   b. the audience
   c. the post commander
   d. yourself

5. Which of the following is the most important characteristic of a good interviewer?
   a. a good talker
   b. a subject matter expert
   c. a good listener
   d. a well-known person in his own right
6. What is the preferred way of presenting an interview?
   a. live
   b. remote
   c. scripted
   d. taped
7. Which of the following can you do to make the interviewee feel more at ease?
   a. Provide him with a written script.
   b. Talk about other things before starting the interview.
   c. Give him a list of the questions.
   d. Let him hold the microphone.
8. Ambient or background noise
   a. gives a feeling of being on the scene.
   b. detracts from the interview regardless of the sound level.
   c. is an integral part of any good interview.
   d. can be completely eliminated by proper microphone technique.
9. When should you check your equipment for a remote interview?
   a. before leaving the studio and after conducting the interview
   b. before leaving the studio and just before conducting the interview
   c. before leaving the studio, just before conducting the interview and at the conclusion of the interview
   d. before conducting the interview and at the conclusion of the interview

10. Which of the following statements is true about conducting live interviews?
    a. They are rarely conducted on radio.
    b. They are difficult to control for content and timing.
    c. They are often conducted on television.
    d. They are the easiest to control for content and timing.
11. What should you do if you receive an obscure answer while conducting an interview?
    a. Ask the interviewee to clarify.
    b. Let him continue since it would be antagonistic to ask the question again.
    c. Include a clarification as part of your conclusion.
    d. Edit the question and answer from the interview.
12. When editing the interview tape, make sure
    a. it complies with public affairs policy.
    b. the questions are arranged in descending order of importance.
    c. to delete only those portions which make you sound bad.
    d. not to delete any portion of the responses, as this will change the meaning intended by the interviewee.
13. During a television interview, the guest should be
    a. looking directly at the camera.
    b. looking at the interviewer.
    c. looking at the floor director for his cues.

INTRODUCTION

Radio station managers found out many years ago that interview programs held audience attention better than straight talk shows. Interviewing is an art; it is probably the most difficult task in broadcasting. In the space of a few minutes the interviewer must draw out answers and reveal attitudes that would normally take hours or even days of ordinary conversation. He must do it with various types of people, in front of cameras, under hot lights and in front of microphones. The interviewer's job is to extract the facts and make sure they are clearly presented to the audience.

One of an Army broadcaster's major assignments at an Armed Forces Radio and Television outlet or Closed Circuit Radio/Television facility is conducting interviews. His assignments may include interviewing music and motion picture stars, politicians, community leaders and Little League coaches.

Regardless of the importance or prominence of the subject, the interviewer must not forget the intent of the interview; that is to extract the facts, emphasizing the important details and keeping the audience informed.

TYPES OF INTERVIEWS AND METHODS OF INTERVIEWING

Interviews may be classified into three general types.

- Opinion
- Information
- Personality

And there are three major methods of conducting an interview.

- Scripted
- Semiscripted
- Ad-lib.

Each type and method may have similarities, but they are used in various ways. It will be up to you, the interviewer, to decide which is right for your situation. There are advantages and disadvantages to all forms of presentation, as you will discover in this lesson.

Types of Interviews

Opinion Interviews

While personal opinions may surface in other forms of interviewing, the thoughts or opinions (whether right or wrong) of the interviewee are in the spotlight in this type of interview. This takes an alert interviewer to follow and expand on the individual's thoughts.

The opinion interview is usually applied in broadcasting to support magazine or expanded news formats. A common form of this type of interview is the "man on the street" interview. The broadcaster stations himself in a busy public area and stops individuals to ask a question on a specific issue. Your station manager might send you out to ask for opinions or comments on a radical new fashion or fad, the completion of a commissary or post exchange, the outcome of a sporting event or countless other situations.

Commercial stations usually ask a question dealing with a highly controversial issue. However, policy dictates that AFRTS and other military broadcast outlets refrain from posing questions that would adversely affect the morale of U.S. personnel or would serve to undermine the commander's authority. Check with your local public affairs office or your supervisor if you plan to do this type of interview.

When using the opinion interview, avoid employing the "stacked deck" method of gathering your data. In other words, as in formal surveys, make sure you have a cross section in your sampling. Don't just ask for a response from one group of people. Gather your responses from young and old, male and female, and people of various ethnic backgrounds. This will give your completed program credibility. Don't load the question. For example: "Excuse me sir, don't you think the new commissary is being constructed in an inaccessible location?" Such a question leads the interviewee to respond with a particular answer. Don't just air the responses you like. Mix the negative with the positive responses. Tally your results, and tell the outcome.

You should have your questions prepared ahead of time and make sure you thoroughly research the topic. The audience does not expect the man on the street to be an expert, but it does want the interviewer to be thoroughly knowledgeable of the subject being discussed.

Information Interviews

This is the most common form of interview used at military broadcast facilities. The civilian broadcast equivalent is the public service interview. Your subject may be the provost marshal discussing local activities during Crime Prevention Week or the recreation services director talking about what's offered at the recreation center. You might do an interview with a physician for a health series or the post commander for a weekly interview program on command information. Whatever the topic may be, the object is to inform the audience.

The interviewer should research the topic and prepare the questions well in advance. You don't have to show your questions in advance to the person being interviewed, but it helps to keep your topic on track if you give your subject an idea of what you will be asking.

Army broadcasters may be assigned to cover accidents or disasters. Your first point of contact in this type of situation is the public affairs office. When doing an interview in conjunction with an accident or disaster, be sensitive to the feelings of others. Be careful in phrasing your questions and in your tone of delivery. Use tact in finding out the who, what, when, where, why and how, and double-check your facts.

Personality Interviews

Another form of interview often assigned to Army broadcasters is the personality interview. Here the person is important because of what happened to him, what he has done or because of the position he holds. It may be a timely feature story interview, a regular series or a celebrity interview.

Feature story interview situations or subjects range from novelties and stunts to craftsmen and current event personalities. The announcer must be versatile enough to make his delivery match the event. He must be sensitive to the situation. He would not want to antagonize the interviewee by making light of something the interviewee takes seriously.

Often, Army broadcasters will be assigned to interview famous recording artists, motion picture or sports personalities. This is where the station manager selects his best interviewer. Such selection rewards the staff announcer who has mastered the techniques of interviewing and who diligently follows all the rules of interviewing.

Personalities or celebrities are accustomed to being interviewed. They are well-seasoned at this art. If you're not careful, they may try to run the show.

The key to producing a good personality interview is, again, research. Read every available newspaper or magazine article on your subject. Know about his past, his rise to success, what he is doing now and his plans for the future.

Write intelligent and stimulating questions. Personality subjects appreciate new material. They grow weary of answering the same questions time and time again.

Methods of Interviewing

There are three major methods of conducting an interview: ad-lib, scripted and semiscripted.

Ad-lib

While all interviews should be conversational, the ad-lib method can carry this to the extreme. The unprepared atmosphere of the "just sit down and start talking" method can cause stuttering, repeated questions or answers, off-the-subject discussions, long pauses and security/propriety violations. This method requires absolute concentration on the part of the interviewer. Areas where this type of method can be used include occasions of spontaneous news such as on-the-scene reports and other "live" topics of interest. Be wary of ad-lib interviews.

Scripted

The ad-lib interview taken to the other extreme is the fully scripted interview. Here, all of the questions and answers are prepared in advance and the individuals involved simply read the prepared text. While certain high-ranking officers and officials involved in sensitive or security areas may prefer this method, the interview mustn't sound like it is being read. If it does, then the conversational or personal aspect of the interview is lost, along with listener interest. If at all possible, try to avoid the scripted interview.

Semiscripted

This method is the best for most interviews. Here, the interviewer has prepared by researching the subject and interviewee, discussed possible questions in advance and perhaps even rehearsed the interview. This method provides an excellent balance between the ad-lib and fully scripted methods. It is personal, yet focused and not rambling.

Remember, you must decide which method of questioning you are going to use. The method will depend on the subject, time, place and other intangibles that make each interview different.

SELF-EVALUATION EXERCISE

Exercise 1:

1. Which of the following is an example of an opinion interview?
   a. a "man on the street" interview
   b. a public service interview
   c. a celebrity interview
   d. a health series interview
2. What is the most common interview used at military broadcast facilities?
   a. opinion
   b. celebrity
   c. information
   d. personality
3. When is a scripted interview used?
   a. during an opinion interview
   b. to achieve a conversational and spontaneous atmosphere
   c. during celebrity interviews
   d. when preferred by certain high-ranking officials
4. Which is the best method to use during an information interview?
   a. scripted
   b. semiscripted
   c. ad-lib

ANSWERS TO SELF-EVALUATION EXERCISE

Self-evaluation Exercise 1:

1. a. a "man on the street" interview
2. c. information
3. d. when preferred by certain high-ranking officials
4. b. semiscripted

PREPARING FOR THE INTERVIEW

However different radio and television interviews may seem, preparation for both is similar. Whether you are assigned an interview or you develop the story yourself, planning is essential.

Arranging the Interview

- Identify yourself by name, rank and office.
- Make sure the potential interviewee is an expert on the subject. Just because a person is in charge doesn't mean he is the most knowledgeable.
- Tell the source what subject you want to cover in the interview.
- Let the interviewee know how the information obtained during the interview will be used.
- Arrange a time and date for the interview. When possible, let the source set the time, date and place for the interview. This will make the interviewee feel more comfortable.
- In closing, recap the arrangements.
- If the interview is more than a day away, contact your source a few hours in advance of the scheduled time of the interview to confirm the arrangements.

Researching the Subject

Regardless of the type of interview, the interviewer should know the subject. Your audience expects you to be knowledgeable, and the interviewee expects you to know about him or the topic of the interview. The more you know, the better your questions will be. In fact, it's a good idea to go into an interview knowing all the answers to the questions you will ask.

Here are some ways to find out about your subject:

- Check with the appropriate public affairs office for a biography or fact sheet if the story involves a distinguished visitor, key officer or military equipment.
- Check the public affairs office for guidance on subjects that might be sensitive.

- Check the library for useful background material (magazine or newspaper articles, encyclopedias, reference books, technical manuals, etc.).
- Know where and how to find the point of contact for the subject or seek out local expertise at the appropriate agency and talk to these people about the subject or topic of your interview. This will add depth and background to your primary interview.

It's important for you to know all you can possibly know about your subject, but be careful how you use your research material. Not only do you have a responsibility to inform or entertain your audience, you also have a responsibility to the person being interviewed to be accurate in the facts you have collected. You may have picked up erroneous information during the course of your research. Let the research material guide the interview, not control it. Seek out new and fresh information from the interviewee. While conducting the interview, remember that you represent the audience, who doesn't have all the facts you do.

Formulating Questions

The key to a good interview is asking clear, concise questions. Determine the focus of your interview and formulate your questions around a primary idea. Be prepared to leave yourself open to new information you may not have known about. You might have to switch your focus or incorporate new information into your final product.

Different types of interviews have different approaches with different types of questions. The length of time you have will also determine the questions you can ask. If you have lots of time, you can discuss the interview at length. If you don't have the time, word your questions to quickly get to the point.

Keep the following in mind when drafting your questions before the interview:

- Ask open-ended questions, questions that cannot be answered only with a "yes" or "no" reply. For example:

  Don't ask: "Is your team up for today's game?"
  Instead, ask: "Describe your team's attitude for today's game."

If you do ask a question that is answered by "yes" or "no," ask the interviewee to explain his answers in more detail. Also, by using who, what, when, where, why or how as the first word in your question, you assure yourself of more than a "yes" or "no" reply.

- Be simple and direct. Don't beat around the bush in asking a question or by asking multiple questions. This will only confuse the interviewee and your audience.
- "Off-the-record" conversations are exactly that--off-the-record. Don't ask questions about them during the interview.
- Don't ask trite questions. For example:

  "Today our guest is Senator John Doe, Democrat from Massachusetts. How are you today?"
- Don't ask your guest embarrassing or antagonistic questions.
- Avoid jargon. If you must use jargon or acronyms, explain them. Don't assume that your audience knows the topic as well as you or the interviewee.
- Don't comment on responses in trite ways or act surprised. For example:

  "I agree." You are not being interviewed. "You don't say!" This is not only a surprised response, it sounds trite.
- Use questions that would interest your audience. Ask yourself what it is they would like to know from the person you are interviewing.
- Prepare more questions than you think you'll need.

The Format

There are three parts to the interview: the opening, the body and the close.

- The opening clearly identifies you, your subject and the topic. This allows your audience to know "up front" whether the interview has any direct interest to them. Additionally, the opening can give your location to establish a local tie in or explain any background noises.

- The body is the interview itself, the questions and answers. This is where the interview takes shape and becomes a reality.
- The close is an abbreviated form of the opening. Here, you can briefly summarize the content of the interview and once again identify yourself and your guest.

The open/close may be the most important part of the story, since the open grabs the audience's attention and the close provides a conclusion to the story being told.

After you have determined the focus of the interview and have formulated your questions, you may be able, if the situation allows, to write and record the opening and close before you talk to your guest. For radio, if you want ambient sounds, take your script along and read it at the interview site. For television, memorize those parts you will do on camera. Of course, if you need additional information that you will gather during the interview, you can record the open/close afterward.

This is the basic format for all interviews, but you don't have to lock yourself into it for every interview you do. Be creative with visuals or audio. Vary the wording of the open and close so that your interviews don't begin to sound repetitious.

Live or Taped

You will rarely be asked to conduct a live television interview. However, when planning a radio interview, consider whether you want to present it live or on tape.

Live interviews, especially opinion interviews, are difficult to control from both a propriety and sensitivity aspect. There are several ways you can conduct live interviews on radio.

- In-studio: usually personality or informative interviews. These may be either spontaneous or semiscripted. Make sure you have enough microphones for everyone. Studio interviews tend to present a sterile atmosphere and a strange location may intimidate the guest.
- Remote: informative, personality, or "man on the street" type interviews. Remotes are often conducted at an event. The major disadvantages of a remote interview are limitations in station equipment and the lack of control over the environment. However, you have the advantage of timeliness and immediacy of an on-the-scene report.

- Telephone: personality, informative or opinion interviews. Care must be taken so that audio levels are balanced and the audio quality is good. Inform the interviewee beforehand that you plan to broadcast the discussion live.

Taped, or "canned," is the preferred way to present an interview, whether radio or television, since taping gives the interviewer total control of timing, format and content. Choose the means or location to bring out the best in your guest and subject.

- Studio: You have total technical control, but this method ususally lacks action, presence or spontaneity.
- Field: The listener has the feeling of being on the scene. However, make sure the background noise enhances rather than disrupts the interview. Knowing the directional capabilities of your microphone and using the right one makes a big difference here. Record extra background noise in the event a question has to be redone later in the studio.
- Telephone: You can respond quickly to news events by taping interviews over the telephone. Use only portions of the interview as news inserts or actualities because the audio quality is generally poor and would become distracting over a period of time. If your questions will be used as part of the interview or actuality, make sure the audio levels are balanced.

Location

You may have no choice as to whether you do a television interview in the studio or as a remote. If you do have a choice, the studio is preferred for a self-contained interview program. The studio provides a controlled environment. The sets are ready, shots and camera movements are planned, audio is checked well in advance and the crew is prepared long before the interview begins.

The set determines the tone of the interview. Viewers form their first impression from the set. It should complement the interview, not compete for the viewers' attention. A neutral set focuses the viewers' attention on the interview since there are few distractions. They're easy to prepare, but may appear flat or uninteresting. Adding furniture, plants or other props makes it more interesting, but be careful to avoid a cluttered look. Be aware of background sets or activity that may distract from the interview. The proper set depends on the atmosphere you want to create.

Many of the radio or television interviews you'll be doing won't be in a studio. By recording an interview on location, you add excitement, realism and a sense of being there. Often an interview subject is more comfortable in his own office or surroundings than in a studio, and this will probably mean a better interview.

If time permits, survey the location of the remote interview to avoid problems. Your primary consideration should be to check the acoustics and decide if ambient noise will be distracting. Use of background noise can give the listener a sense of being there if it is unobtrusive and blended at a level that doesn't overpower the conversation. Your equipment may record noise you're not aware of from air conditioning or other electronic equipment. Find an alternate location if you think you'll have problems. If you're using AC power, locate the power supply and decide if it's convenient to the interview location.

Your recorder can also pick up radio frequency interference from such things as radar fields and antennas. RF interference can distort your recording. If you encounter this problem, you can shield your recorder with aluminum foil or another metal object, or switching to batteries may help if you're using an AC outlet.

Additionally, for television, you'll want to know if the power supply can handle your lights. Check the location at about the same time of day you'll be shooting so that you can determine the lighting requirements. See if you can position your cameras for the required shots. Take into account the visual background as well as appropriateness of the setting to the talent and subject. Not only should you and the interviewee be comfortable in the interview setting, but the setting should be relevant to the subject matter as well. Also, a good way to keep the crew happy is to ensure you have some place close by to unload the equipment.

Equipment

Particular attention must be paid to the technical aspects of a television interview. Any television production is a team operation, and because of its complexity a lot of planning will go into the interview. As the talent of a studio interview for television, you probably will not set up the equipment. However, for an in-studio radio interview, you can more readily become personally involved.

Check the record and playback on your reel-to-reel. Make sure you're recording at the right speed. If necessary, clean the heads or have it done by the engineers. Ensure the microphones are working and listen for audio quality as you're doing this. You may have the latest equipment and the best technical crew around, but it's best to leave nothing to chance.

Planning is an important part of all interviews you do, but it becomes even more critical when you leave the studio.

Radio

- If batteries are used to power the recorder or operate the microphone, ensure they are fresh and take extra ones along.
- If you plan to use an AC wall outlet, make sure there's one close to the interview location and that the power cord will reach, or take an extension cord.
- Check the record and playback functions on the recorder before leaving the studio. Check them again at the interview location. Spot check the playback after the interview to be sure you have something on tape, but don't give the interviewee the chance to ask for a retake.
- Take extra blank cassette tapes.

Television

- Check your equipment cables to make sure you have the right ones and that they are all working.
- Check all batteries the day before to make sure they're fully charged. If they're not, you'll have time to charge them overnight.
- Erase all videocassettes to be used.
- Check each cassette to make sure it has the red pin inserted on the underside. This is the protective system to make sure material doesn't accidentally get erased. If the red pin is not in place, you cannot record on that particular cassette. Keep a few extra red pins in your equipment case.
- Check the condition of the camera and the camera lens.
- Run a test with the camera, recorder and microphones to ensure each of the components functions properly.

- Perform an inventory of the camera, viewfinder, cables, microphones, spare batteries, spare videocassettes, headsets and all other needed gear.
- Inventory the lighting kit.
- Check bulbs to ensure they still operate.
- If your camera uses a white card for color balancing, make sure one is packed in your equipment case.
- Transport cases and containers for all gear should be checked to make sure they're available and in good condition, with working latches.

Part of your planning should include checking your equipment for serviceability and taking an inventory of everything you'll need. Make a checklist that you can use for all your radio or television interviews and use it before you walk out the door. Afterward, it will be too late.

Transportation

"You can't get there from here." And that's exactly what will happen if you don't plan for transportation early. Availability of transportation varies from place to place. Regardless of whether your unit has its own vehicle or you rely on a motor pool, advance coordination is necessary. In some cases the organization you're doing a story on may provide transportation. However, don't depend on it. Getting there remains your responsibility.

Appearance

Personal appearance is always important whether in your day-to-day duties or while conducting interviews for radio and television. Any violation of the Army uniform, haircut, moustache or weight policies is particularly obvious on camera and will be noticed. Your appearance can enhance your credibility or detract from it, so be aware of what you look like before you set out for your interview.

SELF-EVALUATION EXERCISE

Exercise 2:

1. You have been assigned to interview an undersecretary of the Army. Where would you go first to research the subject?
   a. newspaper morgue
   b. appropriate PAO
   c. library
   d. the appropriate military agency
2. The body of an interview
   a. is where the interview takes shape.
   b. is the most important part of the completed interview.
   c. includes a summary or conclusion.
   d. initially identifies you, your subject and the topic.
3. The batteries for a remote television interview should be checked
   a. by the engineering staff.
   b. by the cameraman.
   c. the day before the interview.
   d. the morning of the interview.
4. What should be done if you encounter RF interference?
   a. Use an AC outlet.
   b. Shield the recorder with metal.
   c. Conduct the interview indoors.
5. When surveying a location for a radio interview, which of the following is the primary consideration?
   a. Check at approximately the same time of day as the interview because the acoustics may change.
   b. Make sure there is adequate parking for your vehicle so you can unload your equipment.
   c. Decide if any ambient noise will be distracting and look for an alternate location if necessary.
   d. Ensure the location adds ambient noise to lend color to the interview.
6. When formulating questions before the interview, ask those that
   a. satisfy CI requirements.
   b. you, the interviewer, want to know.
   c. are directed by the Public Affairs Office.
   d. your audience would like to know.

ANSWERS TO SELF-EVALUATION EXERCISE

Self-evaluation Exercise 2:

1. b. appropriate PAO
2. a. is where the interview takes shape.
3. c. the day before the interview.
4. b. Shield the recorder with metal.
5. c. Decide if any ambient noise will be distracting and look for an alternate location if necessary.
6. d. your audience would like to know.

CONDUCTING THE INTERVIEW

You've done your research, formulated your questions, scouted the location, checked your equipment, arranged transportation to the interview site and you're looking good. So, what's next?

Be on Time

It's very important to make a good impression on your interviewee. He may not have a lot of time to do this interview and, remember, your time is valuable also. Setting up for a television interview takes much more time than setting up for a radio interview. Arrive at the interview site well before the scheduled time in order to set up the lights, camera and recording equipment. Being late for an interview may cause your subject to be less cooperative than he might have been and, in some cases, it may mean less time to ask important questions.

Make Your Subject Feel Comfortable

If your subject is being interviewed for the first time, he'll probably be nervous. Occasionally, an interviewee has granted an interview at the direction of his superior and may not want to cooperate fully. You need to be able to recognize barriers to communication so that you can overcome them. Here are some common signs of nervousness.

- tapping of a pencil or fingers on the desk
- lack of eye contact
- pulling away from the microphone
- stuttering or stammering excessively
- very short answers to your questions
- frequent interruptions of your questions

Sometimes you can make him feel comfortable by taking his mind off the interview, talking about other things. Show him that you have genuine interest in what you are about to do. Since everyone has a sense of personal space, a "comfort zone," select a seating arrangement that is comfortable to your guest. But remember that you do need to get the microphone close for good audio quality. Regardless of how you may think your equipment is, some people are uncomfortable around radio or television recording equipment, so take the time to explain how it will be used.

If you follow these simple guidelines, your subject should feel comfortable and your product will sound professional.

Equipment

Check your equipment. You did that before you left, didn't you? Do it again.

Be Attentive

The most important characteristic of a good interviewer is being a good listener. Your subject will be more cooperative if he perceives that you're interested in what he is saying. Good eye contact and appropriate responses at the right time will show the interviewee that you're really paying attention and want to know what he has to say.

Always listen to what your subject is saying. More interviewers fall into traps because they are more concerned about what they are going to ask next rather than what was being said. Interviewees occasionally answer the question you are about to ask, so be alert.

By being an active listener and asking the appropriate question, you can keep your interview on track and get the information you need in as short a time as possible. If you receive obscure, contradictory or confusing answers to your questions, ask follow-up questions to clarify the point. If the interviewee strays in his answer to a question, rephrase or repeat the question to bring the source back on track. When you listen, you may also pick up on a fact you did not know about and be able to slip in fruitful follow-up questions.

Visualize the editing process while you are recording. If your subject tends to ramble when answering questions, close attention to the responses will let you know when the question is answered and, therefore, when you can edit.

Remember that what you hear can often be more important than what you ask.

Interviewing for Radio

Microphone technique is very important to the success of a radio interview. However, many of the techniques discussed here are important to television also. Since good audio quality is critical, keep the following in mind while conducting the radio interview.

- If you are using a cassette recorder, use a hand-held microphone instead of the microphone built into the recorder since the hand-held one has better pickup.
- Establish a proper level.
- Move the microphone to and from the interviewee in a fluid motion.
- Avoid "cable rattle" by isolating the microphone cord from bumping and rubbing noises by looping the cable around your hand.
- If you are using only segments of the interview for actualities, the recorded quality of your questions is not important. Therefore, you can help eliminate microphone noise by using a microphone stand or by not moving it back toward yourself when you ask questions.
- Windscreens should be used when outdoors.
- Be familiar with the directional characteristics of your microphone.
- Don't let your subject take the microphone. Maintain control of the interview at all times.
- If you are interviewing more than one person at the same time, position the subjects as close as possible and follow the conversation with the microphone or seat them at a table and place an omnidirectional microphone in front of them. Better yet, use more than one microphone. Don't forget to identify each of your subjects the first time they speak since your listeners cannot see whom you are talking to.

For more information on microphone technique, microphone placement, types of microphones and their directional capabilities, see TEC Lesson 570-214-1040A, "Select and Set Up Microphones."

Interviewing for Television

Brief your guest to disregard the presence of the camera and crew. The camera is eavesdropping on your conversation and people usually look at each other when they talk. If your guest looks straight at the camera, this conversational aspect is lost.

Sit up straight in the chair and don't swivel. If you use gestures make them deliberate and natural. Facial expressions should be sincere. If you use notes, don't try to hide them.

As good audio is essential to the success of the radio interview, so are visuals to the television interview. The format of the show, the number of guests or whether the interview is being done in the studio or on location generally determines the number of cameras you will use. Most in-studio interview programs use a minimum of two cameras. A two-camera interview allows the director to shoot the interviewer with one camera and the guest with the other. The shots should be fairly tight as television is a close-up medium.

One camera interviews limit the ability to provide visual shot variety. The basic two-shot of the interviewer and guest is the shot most used with some zoom-in and zoom-out to provide variety. If you are using videotape, first shoot the guest answering the questions and then shoot the interviewer reasking those questions. Editing is where you can provide variety for the audience.

A three-camera interview provides the director with even more possibilities for shot variety. With three cameras, you can get wide-angle or cover shots of the set or close-ups of an object used in conjunction with the interview.

Camera composition also offers visual variety. One shot to consider is the over-the-shoulder shot which adds a perception of depth. A slow zoom-in adds emphasis to what the person is saying. A slow zoom-out de-emphasizes or can tell the audience the interview is wrapping up. Vary your shots and avoid using the same shots back to back.

During a studio interview, the host will usually welcome the audience, and then he'll introduce the guest, the topic and the occasion while looking directly at the camera. At the conclusion, the host is again looking directly at the camera. The open and close of a remote interview are also often done on-camera. The opening and closing shot should begin and end with only the host, who should have eye contact with the camera. While on a remote, discuss your out-cue with the cameraman, so that he will know when to begin his closing shot and you will be the only person in the essential video area at the end of the interview.

For some news actualities and features, the open and close is done off camera. To maintain consistent sound quality, use the same equipment you used for the interview.

Remote interviews are often done to provide quick sound bites which are added into a newscast or are part of feature stories. These sound bites are short comments or reactions which relate to the news story or help to tell the story in the feature. While doing this type of interview, instruct the cameraman to shoot the interview tight. A close-up or medium shot is most effective.

Many interviews are done with cutaways and cut-ins to lend video relief or color to complement what is being said. Cutaways are usually wide-angle or reverse shots used as transitional footage. Cut-ins are close-ups of an object. For example, suppose you were conducting an interview with a company commander whose unit had just won a NATO tank gunnery match. To complement or add color to what the captain is saying, you would have the cameraman shoot footage of the tanks, the tanks firing, the men performing preventive maintenance. This gives you a professional product that will be interesting to the viewer and avoid the so-called "talking heads" feature that you would otherwise have had.

Wrapping Up the Interview

Before you leave your guest, check your equipment. Again? Yes. Make sure you actually recorded something and listen for audio quality. It's better to know now than when you get back to your office or studio. You may have the time to redo the interview, or you can schedule the interview for a later time. Listen just to a small portion of the interview, though. Your subject invariably will be displeased with the way he sounds and may want to do the interview over.

Thank the interviewee for his time.

POST PRODUCTION

Once you have completed talking to the interviewee and you are back at your studio or office, immediately review the interview tape while it's still fresh in your mind.

- Make a run sheet for your radio interview listing questions, answers and good edit locations. Before you preview the footage for your television interview, reset the tape counter to zero, then log each scene on a shot sheet by number in the order it appears on the tape. Check for acceptable audio, video and picture composition, and note more than one take of a single scene and the one to be used.
- Be certain your topic does not violate security or public affairs policy as stated in AR 360-5, AR 360-81 and AR 380-5. If you are working at an AFRTS outlet, DOD Directive 5120.20 also applies. The topic should not violate local command public affairs policy. Your interview must not be libelous, violate host country sensitivities if you are assigned overseas or violate privacy in accordance with AR 340-21.

- Since you will probably have a time requirement, keep track of the running time of each question and response.
- Make sure audio levels match at edit points.
- Protect your interviewee's credibility. Be careful when editing someone else's words that you do not change the meaning intended by the interviewee. This is very easy to do with audiotape editing. It is possible to delete, add or rearrange words, sounds, sentences and entire paragraphs, arranging them into a finished product.

The final step is reviewing the finished product before passing it on to your supervisor and before it goes on the air. Check the content. Does it tell the story? Are the questions answered? Is it concise and interesting? Is it factual? Check the technical quality of the final product for clean edits, and good audio and/or video.

Exercise 3:

1. What do you do if your subject strays in his answer to a question?
   a. Stay with questions you prepared and edit the extraneous information.
   b. Rephrase or repeat the question.
   c. Ask him to respond only to the question just asked.
   d. Eliminate the response from the final product for clarity.
2. How do you avoid cable rattle?
   a. Have one person hold the microphone.
   b. Wrap the cable around your hand.
   c. Use a microphone with the appropriate directional capability.
3. What are cutaways?
   a. close-ups of an object which support the interview
   b. close-ups of the interviewee answering questions
   c. wide-angle shots of the interviewer and interviewee
   d. wide-angle or reverse shots which support the interview
4. A slow zoom-in
   a. emphasizes what is being said.
   b. de-emphasizes what is being said.
   c. is used to tell the audience the interview is ending.
5. What is a shot sheet used for?
   a. logging questions and answers in a logical order
   b. indicating good edit locations
   c. ensuring the footage complies with public affairs policy
   d. logging each scene as it appears in sequence
6. What regulation governs privacy?
   a. AR 340-21
   b. AR 380-5
   c. AR 360-5
   d. AR 360-81

ANSWERS TO SELF-EVALUATION EXERCISE

Self-evaluation Exercise 3:

1. b. rephrase or repeat the question.
2. b. Wrap the cable around your hand.
3. d. wide-angle or reverse shots which support the interview
4. a. emphasizes what is being said.
5. d. logging each scene as it appears in sequence
6. a. AR 340-21

ANSWERS TO PRE-TEST/POST-TEST

The total possible score is 13 points. A passing score is 10 points or more.

1. c. opinion, information, personality
2. d. ad lib, semiscripted, scripted
3. d. semiscripted
4. b. the audience
5. c. a good listener
6. d. taped
7. b. Talk about other things before starting the interview.
8. a. gives a feeling of being on the scene.
9. c. before leaving the studio, just before conducting the interview and at the conclusion of the interview
10. b. They are difficult to control for timing and content.
11. a. Ask the interviewee to clarify.
12. a. it complies with public affairs policy.
13. b. looking at the interviewer.

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